

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER SUBMITS F-16 REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

REF: (A) COPENHAGEN 2289 DTG 201515Z APR 77

(B) COPENHAGEN 2142 DTG 131658Z APR 77

SUMMARY. DEFENSE MINISTER MOLLER'S STATUS REPORT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE F-16 EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED THE CRITICISMS CONTAINED IN THE GAO REPORT WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN WIDE PRESS PLAY. THE "58PERCENT QUESTION" IS STILL SOMEWHAT MURKY. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR HOW LONG THE NECESSARY PARLIAMENTARY PLAY-OUT WILL TAKE BEFORE THE DANES CAN SIGN THE LOA. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF A NINE-PAGE STATEMENT ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE STATUS OF THE F-16 SUBMITTED IN WRITING BY DEFENSE MINISTER ORLA MOLLER TO FOLKETING LATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. AN INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF MOST OF THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT IS BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTTEL.

2. IN HIS STATEMENT, MOLLER DEPLORED THE ONE-SIDED PRESS TREATMENT OF F-16 PROBLEMS AND WENT AHEAD TO

AFFIRM THAT THE F-16 IS THE BEST AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE FOR ITS PURPOSE TODAY. HE THEN EFFECTIVELY REBUTTED THE SPECIFIC CRITICISMS OF THE F-16 PROGRAM CONTAINED IN THE GAO REPORT. FINALLY, HE DISCUSSED THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE DANISH CO-PRODUCTION PROGRAM. MOLLER ESTIMATED THAT CONTRACTS REPRESENTING ABOUT 40 PERCENT OFFSET HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED. HIS STATEMENT ON THE QUESTION OF THE 58 PERCENT "COMMITMENT" TO DENMARK ALONE WAS SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT BUT HE DID EXPRESS OPTIMISM THAT "ABOUT 55 PERCENT " OFFSET WILL ULTIMATELY BE ACHIEVED AS THE RESULT OF NEW CONTRACTS TO BE AWARDED HERE.

3. PRESS PLAY, BY AND LARGE, ACCURATELY REFLECTS MOLLER'S PRESENTATION.

4. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY (REF B), THE ANTICIPATED PARLIAMENTARY PLAY OUT WILL BE A CALL FOR A GENERAL DEBATE ON THE F-16 PROGRAM WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE SOME TIME NEXT WEEK. MOLLER WILL THEN RETURN TO THE FOLKETING FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN THE LETTER OF OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE AT THE INCREASED PRICE LEVEL.

5. IN HIS REPORT, MOLLER MADE NO MENTION OF THE MAY 2 DEADLINE IN SIGNING THE LETTER OF OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE (LOA). ONE PRESS STORY, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY BASED ON A SOURCE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, SAID THAT IT WAS NOT CERTAIN WHETHER AN EXTENSION OF THE LOA DEADLINE WOULD ULTIMATELY BE NEEDED BY DENMARK. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NO FORMAL REQUEST HAS YET BEEN MADE. IT MAY WELL BE THAT MOLLER STILL HOPES THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS CAN BE COMPLETED IN ORDER FOR HIM TO MEET THE MAY 2 DEADLINE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE KNOW THAT THE FOLKETING CALENDAR HAS BECOME HEAVILY CHARGED AND EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES (SUCH AS EVENING SESSIONS) MAY WELL BE REQUIRED IF THE DEADLINE IS, IN FACT, MET. WHILE WE CANNOT PREDICT THE EXACT TIMING OF DENMARK'S SIGNING THE LOA, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE F-16 PROGRAM IS NOT IN SERIOUS TROUBLE HERE. DEAN

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